THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) The Minimum Support Price (MSP) of wheat at Rs. 650 per quintal for 2005-06 season has been recently announced by the Governement and there is no proposal before the Government to increase the MSP of wheat.

(b) and (c) The Government has no proposal to increase the MSP of agricultural products. MSP for onion is not fixed by Government. However, the Government implements the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) for procurement of horticultural and perishable agricultural commodities, including onion. MIS is implemented for a particular commodity on the request of the State Government which is ready to bear 50% loss (25% in case of North Eastern States), if any, in its implementation.

Plan for dry and farming

1071. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether dry land and the rain-fed areas, constituting 60 per cent of the zone areas in the country, are a major challenge; and

(b) if so, Government's plans to stimulate dry land farming for arid and semi-arid regions?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTUE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) Dry land and rainfed areas are a major challenge for the country because of their low productivity. The Ministry of Agriculture has formulated a new scheme 'Enhancing Sustainability of Dry land Farming Systems' to address the problems of dryland farming in semi-arid and arid regions of the country particularly in the districts having low annual rainfall and less coverage under irrigation.

Failure of BT. Cotton in Tamil Nadu

†1072. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the attempts of growers for producing Bt. cotton in Tamil Nadu are now ending in failure after the same failed in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, the facts in this regard;

(c) whether any assessment has been made for the loss incurred by growers of Tamil Nadu due to said reasons; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) As per the information provided by Govt. of Tamil Nadu, cultivation of Bt. Cotton is picking up in the State. The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) in the Ministry of Environment & Forests have notified certain Bt. Cotton hybrids for commercial cultivation after assessing the performance through various multi location and large scale field trials. The area covered under the Bt. Cotton is less compared to the other cotton varieties. No reports on failure has been received so far.

(c) and (d Question does not arise.

NAFED Loan

†1073. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:
DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India is functional in the country;

(b) if so, the main responsibility entrusted to the said Federation;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the said Federation has also provided loan in the past;

(d) if so, the amount disbursed as loan from 2000 to the end of 2004; and

(e) the income earned annually through disbursing loan?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (e) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Suicided in Maharashtra

1074. SHRI DATTA MEGHE:
SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that farmers suicide toll has risen to 100 in Vidarbha;

(b) if so, the details thereof since 2003-04 and the measures taken by the Central Government to reassure farmers;

(c) the details of study, if any, conducted and its outcome;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.